

HEPATITIS A (HAV)

What is Hepatitis A (HAV)?

Hepatitis A (HAV) is a contagious virus that affects the liver. For most people, it is an acute (short-term) infection that goes away on its own, but for people with other chronic (long-term) diseases (e.g., hepatitis B, C, or HIV), it can be more serious.

How Does HAV Spread?

HAV is spread primarily through the feces (stool) of an infected person. Often it occurs when someone consumes food or water that has been contaminated with the virus. Vaccination is effective at preventing HAV infection, but if unvaccinated the people at highest risk for HAV are:

- International travelers who visit countries with high rates of HAV infection
- Men who have sex with men and/or sexual practices involving oral/anal contact
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who inject drugs

Symptoms of HAV

If symptoms occur, they begin two to seven weeks from the date of infection. Adults more often experience symptoms than children. Symptoms can include jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, fever, diarrhea, and feeling tired.

Diagnosis and Treatment of HAV

HAV is diagnosed through a blood test. No medicine is prescribed to treat HAV. Doctors usually recommend getting rest, drinking fluids, and eating a healthy diet. If someone has a severe case of HAV, they may need additional care and/or hospitalization.

Preventing HAV

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children be vaccinated, as well as pregnant women or any adult who wishes to receive the vaccine.

To learn more about HAV, scan the QR code below. For a complete list of all of our free resources, please visit: liverfoundation.org/resource-center.

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For questions about liver wellness and disease, or for emotional support to patients at the point of crisis and information on local resources including physician referrals, please contact our Helpline at 1-800-465-4837.

